



# Social Awareness

## Active and Constructive Communication

### Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

Understanding how the “world works” is a hard part of growing up. Sometimes things happen that we might not agree with. Or maybe someone shares something positive that causes us jealousy. Often these situations lead us to respond in a way that may be hurtful or not what we intend. This can be especially hard when we are not aware of our body language or how the response might affect a friendship, the school or out-of-school environment, or the workplace.

The way we respond to both positive and negative events or situations can affect our relationships, our self-esteem, and our overall happiness. Providing our friends and peers with an “active and constructive” response when they tell us something is a way that we can help to build and foster our relationships and be aware of how our personal emotions can undermine our true intentions.

There are four ways we can respond to others:

1. **Active Constructive-** Enthusiastic and encouraging as well as responsive and empathetic.
  - a. For example, if a friend tells you they are excited about a vacation they are taking with their family, an active constructive response would be, “Wow! That sounds like such a fun trip! I can’t wait to hear about it when you come back.”
2. **Passive Constructive-** Minimizing the importance of what is being told to you.
  - a. Using the same scenario as above, a passive constructive response would be, “Well that doesn’t sound like a trip I would even want to take”.

### Key Takeaways:

- Students will increase their awareness of their body language and tone when responding to friends and classmates.
- Students will increase their empathy.
- Students will increase their organizational awareness.

### Duration + Materials:

- 30 minutes

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Empathy-** The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
- **Organizational Awareness-** The ability to read a group’s emotional currents and power relationships, and to understand the dynamics within relationships.
- **Undermine-** Lessen the effectiveness, power, or ability of, especially gradually or insidiously.
- **Passive-** Accepting or allowing what happens or what others do, without active response.
- **Constructive-** Serving a useful purpose, tending to build up.
- **Destructive-** Tending to refute or disparage.



3. **Active Destructive**- Pointing out something negative.
  - a. Using the same scenario as above, an active destructive response would be, “Well if you take that trip you are going to miss my birthday, which is going to be a really great party.”
4. **Passive Destructive**- Brushing off or ignoring.
  - a. Using the same scenario as above, a passive destructive response would be to change the subject or pay no mind to what was told to you.

## Activity:

1. Teachers will use pre-teaching materials to teach the concepts of different types of responses.
2. Teachers will use the discussion questions to brainstorm with students how these types of interactions might look.
3. Teachers will invite students to role play the different types of responses.
  - a. Students will be instructed to share a positive piece of news with a classmate and the classmate can respond in one of the four different ways.
  - b. Have the rest of the class guess which way they responded.
4. After each role play ask the class how they think that response would impact the overall culture of the classroom, the relationship, or the workplace if everyone was treated that way.
5. Allow 15-20 minutes for role playing and be sure to thank students and praise them for their participation.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Are you ever nervous to share good news with a friend?
2. What would prevent you from sharing something exciting with someone?
3. What does the body language look like for someone engaging in active constructive communication? What about passive constructive? Active destructive? Passive destructive?
  - a. How about the tone, or way they are speaking?
4. Which type of communication would you say you regularly use?
5. How would you like someone to respond to you?

## Reinforcement Activities:

1. Teachers should be sure to model active constructive responses to students when they are sharing news or experiences. Even when you are busy or things are hectic, brushing students off, ignoring them, or pointing out negatives will deter them from sharing in the future.